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SUBJECT: CARICOM PERMREPS URGE U.S. FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE, DEVELOPMENT, AND DISASTER RELIEF

¶1. (SBU) During a meeting with CARICOM Ambassadors on November 15, Amb Khalilzad underscored U.S. interest in working closely with the group on issues of mutual concern at the UN. CARICOM representatives said their priorities included addressing climate change, ensuring a greater UN focus on development, and securing more U.S. and UN assistance in disaster relief. Recalling the U.S.-hosted conference of major carbon emitters in September 2007, they argued that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) should be the "central forum" to deal with these issues. Most of the appeals from CARICOM members involved a request for additional resources, either from the U.S. or the UN. In response, Amb Khalilzad argued it would be difficult to justify requests for new resources until UN member states address the roughly 9,700 existing UN mandates that already exist -- many of which are redundant or no longer necessary.
End Summary.

¶2. (U) At the request of Bahamian PermRep Paulette Bethel, Amb Khalilzad met with CARICOM representatives for over one hour on November 15. PermReps or Charge d'Affaires from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago participated in the meeting. Bethel designated different CARICOM representatives to speak for the group on the issues of climate change, development, disaster relief, and ECOSOC reform. Amb Khalilzad was joined by USUN WHA Senior Area Advisor and Poloff (notetaker).

Amb Khalilzad Hails U.S.-CARICOM Partnership

¶3. (U) Recalling the Conference on the Caribbean held in Washington in June, Amb Khalilzad welcomed the opportunity to continue a dialogue with CARICOM in New York with a view towards increasing our cooperation at the UN. He thanked the group for its role in helping elect U.S. Comptroller David Walker to the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC). Amb Khalilzad highlighted the need to reform the entire UN system, including management reforms as well as expansion of the UNSC, to ensure that it best serves all member states. He underscored the importance of cooperation on country-specific resolutions in the UN Third Committee. Amb Khalilzad recognized that climate change, development issues, and disaster relief are particularly important to CARICOM members, and pledged to continue a dialogue with them in New York on these issues.

¶4. (SBU) In response to questions from CARICOM members, Amb Khalilzad agreed that the upcoming Bali conference should be

the forum in which to develop a framework to address climate change. Such a framework must set the right goals but also allow countries the flexibility to decide how best to meet them. On calls for a greater UN focus on development, Amb Khalilzad argued it would be hard to justify requests for additional resources until member states review the roughly 9,700 mandates that already exist -- many of which are redundant or no longer necessary. Regarding reform of ECOSOC, Amb Khalilzad expressed hope that the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) would help revitalize the body. He noted that in response to calls from developing countries for greater developed country participation in the AMR, the U.S. would make a presentation on this issue at the next ECOSOC meeting. On other issues -- such as the U.S. role in supporting UN disaster relief efforts and calls for more resources for UN funds dedicated to addressing the effects of climate change -- Amb Khalilzad undertook to revert to the group with more information. USUN will prepare a letter from Amb Khalilzad to CARICOM representatives on these issues.

Climate Change: UNFCCC "Central Forum"

¶5. (U) Barbados PR Hackett said climate change is one of the most important issues facing the CARICOM community. He expressed hope that the results of the major emitters conference, recently held in Washington, would feed into the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process -- which he argued should be the "central forum" in which to deal with climate change issues. Underscoring the importance of adaptations for climate change, Hackett called for financing for the UN Adaptation Fund as well as flexible

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guidelines on how the money could be used. Given that the cost of fuel is a major issue for Caribbean economies, he pressed for greater support from the international community for renewable energy. Lastly, he stressed the importance of combating deforestation in the Caribbean. St. Kitts and Nevis PermRep Bart asked about the possibility of an international guarantee for the territorial integrity of states threatened by climate change.

Calls for More UN Focus on Development

¶6. (U) Reprising a familiar theme from earlier U.S.-CARICOM meetings, Hackett pressed for a greater UN focus on development issues, and for more resources for the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). Specifically, Hackett pressed for more support for the Barbados Program of Action for DESA. He complained that requests for more resources are often met with calls from developed countries, including the U.S., to fund new programs from within existing resources. Given that the SYG has requested additional resources for other UN departments focusing on political and peacekeeping issues, Hackett asked Amb Khalilzad either to support additional resources for DESA as well or to press the SYG to redeploy resources from other UN departments to support greater funding for development.

And Appeals for More U.S. Disaster Relief

¶7. (U) Dominica PermRep Gregoire appealed for more U.S. assistance in disaster relief, particularly after several recent hurricanes in the Caribbean, as well as greater coordination between U.S. efforts and those of the UN. Although he expressed appreciation for U.S. help in establishing an early warning system for natural disasters, he argued that resources to fund the Mauritius Strategy to combat such disasters are still lacking. He suggested that the U.S. and CARICOM broaden their partnership on natural disasters to include comprehensive risk insurance against such events. Lastly, Gregoire underscored that while the UN

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was a good first step towards energizing UN efforts on disaster relief, the UN needs a comprehensive plan to deal with all the facets of this issue.

Other Issues: ECOSOC and UNODC

¶ 8. (U) Haitian PermRep Merores called for more effort to be devoted to implementing the decisions taken by the Development Cooperation Forum within ECOSOC. He noted that the 2005 world summit had tasked ECOSOC with examining the coordination of humanitarian assistance within the UN system, and as the ECOSOC President for 2008-09, Merores said he planned to explore how to discharge that responsibility. In this regard, Merores said ECOSOC should consider how to rationalize efforts by the various UN funds and programs with responsibility for humanitarian assistance.

¶ 9. (U) Barbados PermRep Hackett expressed concern that the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was not focused on the issues most important to the Caribbean. Hackett noted that ODC Director Costa recently told CARICOM representatives that his office had to be responsive to the interests of its major donors -- many of whom want UNODC to focus largely on counter-terrorism issues. This mindset, Gregoire complained, had led UNODC to close its regional office in the Caribbean. Noting that terrorism and drug trafficking are sometimes linked, and that drug trafficking on its own poses a great threat to both the U.S and the Caribbean, Gregoire urged the U.S. to work with Costa to re-direct the focus of UNODC.

Khalilzad